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AUTHOR Carlson, Ann D.
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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to: (1) develop a schema from an analysis of research information on child development from birth to three years of age with literature sharing implications for library programs; (2) query librarians in the United States who offer early childhood literature sharing programs about their program practices and attitudes via a mail survey questionnaire; and (3) determine if the practices and attitudes of these librarians corresponded to the schema, and if their practices and attitudes were independent of certain institutional and personal characteristics. The survey portion was conducted between April and June 1982. Survey questions about practices and attitudes were derived from the schema. A demographic section of the survey identified institutional and personal characteristics. Out of 324 librarians queried, 253 participated in the survey (78%). The findings indicate that the literature sharing practices and attitudes of librarians in this study to a large degree corresponded to the schema. In addition, the practices and attitudes were largely independent of institutional and personal characteristics with the exception, in a limited number of practices and attitudes, of the librarian's amount of early childhood development reading. (DMC)

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EARLY CHILDHOOD LITERATURE SHARING PROGRAMS: PUBLIC LIBRARIANS' PRACTICES AND ATTITUDES

By

Ann D. Carlson

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During the past two decades, the importance of a child's early years has come to be recognized in the field of child development. Research dealing with the capabilities of infants and young children, language development, early environmental stimulation, etc. has provided a great amount of early childhood development information. Research has also shown the importance of the parents' role in influencing the development of their young children.

These research findings provided librarians with the impetus for developing programs designed for a new clientele. Since the early 1970's, a growing number of public libraries scattered across the country have initiated early childhood literature sharing programs, i.e., storytimes for children under three years of age and informational programs for parents or caregivers of such children.

With the proliferation of early childhood literature sharing programs in libraries, a need existed to determine if librarians who offered programs in this area were aware of the recent early childhood development information and its implications for literature sharing programs in libraries, and if their awareness was correlated with their institutional and personal characteristics.

The purpose of this study, therefore, was: (1) to develop a

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schema from an analysis of the information about child development from birth to three years of age with literature sharing implications for library programs (which was then reviewed by early childhood specialists for its accuracy; (2) to query librarians in the U.S. who offer early childhood literature sharing programs about their program practices and attitudes via a mail survey questionnaire; and (3) to determine if the practices and attitudes of these librarians corresponded to the schema, and if their practices and attitudes were independent of certain institutional and personal characteristics.

The survey was conducted between April and June 1982. Survey questions about practices and attitudes were derived from the schema. In addition to the practice and attitudes sections, there was a demographic section that identified institutional and personal characteristics. Out of 324 librarians queried, 253 participated in the survey -- a 78% response rate.

Data on institutional characteristics reveal that the largest proportion of participants were children's librarians in a main library with no branches (40%), served suburban communities (53%), received between \$5,000 to \$12,000 during 1981 for children's materials and programming (37%), had only one full-time children's librarian in their library (53%), did not receive any type of grant funding for the programs in question (85%), and did not use

outside consultants in designing their programs (83%).

Data on personal characteristics reveal that the largest proportion of librarians had from four to six years of experience as a children's librarian (28%); held a master's degree in library science (68%); had not had past classroom or nursery school teaching experience (59%); were parents (55%); had on-the-job training (100%), had not taken formal courses in early childhood education (57%), and did not have a specialization or degree in early childhood education (92%) as training for working with children under three years of age; read from one to ten books or articles concerning early childhood development during the previous year (54%); and belonged to at least one professional organization (90%).

Data on background characteristics of the programs show that 93% of the participants offer storytimes for children under three years of age, and nearly one half (49%) offer informational programs. A majority of storytimes (87%) and informational programs (69%) were begun within the past five years.

The findings concerning the correspondence of librarians' practices to the schema were that there was a very high level of agreement between the participants' literature sharing practices and the schema. For example, a significant majority reported that the same librarian conducted storytimes for the duration of the series (91%), that the parents/caregivers stayed with their children

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during storytimes (91%), and that parents/caregivers were encouraged to actively participate with their children in storytime activities (97%).

A high level of agreement between participants' attitudes and the schema was also revealed by an analysis of the data. In order to reduce the data, composite variables were constructed from the attitudinal variables in the survey. On a scale from 1 (total correspondence) to 5 (absence of correspondence) the mean of the most comprehensive index or composite variable was 1.692, indicating a very high level of correspondence to the schema.

Furthermore, the data show that the literature sharing practices (storytime and informational program practices) were independent of institutional and personal variables in the case of all but two practices, where in both cases the personal variable, "librarian's amount of early childhood development reading," was significant.

Finally, the data indicate that in the case of all but three indices of attitudes, the attitudes of librarians were independent of institutional and personal characteristics. In the case of the exceptions, the personal variables, "librarian's amount of early childhood development reading" and "if librarian has taken early childhood education courses," were significant.

In conclusion, the literature sharing practices and attitudes of librarians in this study to a large degree corresponded to the

schema. In addition, the practices and attitudes, by and large, were independent of institutional and personal characteristics with the exception, in a limited number of practices and attitudes, of the librarian's amount of early childhood development reading.

Title: EARLY CHILDHOOD LITERATURE SHARING PROGRAMS:
PUBLIC LIBRARIANS' PRACTICES AND ATTITUDES

Researcher: Ann D. Carlson

The findings of research on the capabilities of infants and young children, their language development, early environmental stimulation, and the parents' role in influencing their development have provided librarians with an impetus for developing programs designed for a new clientele. Since the early 1970s, a growing number of public libraries across the country have initiated early childhood literature sharing programs, i.e., storytimes for children under three years of age and informational programs for their parents or caregivers.

A survey was conducted in April and June 1982 to determine if librarians who offered such programs were aware of recent early childhood development information and its implications for literature sharing in libraries, and if their awareness was correlated with their institutional and personal characteristics. The study developed a schema of information relevant to literature sharing programs about child development from birth to three years of age; queried librarians offering early childhood literature sharing programs about their program practices and attitudes via a mail survey questionnaire; and analyzed the data collected to determine if the practices and attitudes of these librarians corresponded to the schema, and if these practices and attitudes were independent of certain institutional and personal characteristics. Of the 324 librarians queried, 253 responded to the survey for a 78% response rate.

Analysis of the data revealed that there was a very high level of agreement between the literature sharing practices and attitudes of librarians in this study and the schema. In addition, their practices and attitudes were, by and large, independent of institutional and personal characteristics, with the exception in a limited number of cases of the librarian's amount of early childhood development reading.